

Chicagoan's Brasher rides liberty road

By Roger Boye

A Chicago collector has lent his exceedingly rare, Brasher doubloon and another coin to "Roads to Liberty," a traveling exhibit that includes an original draft of the U.S. Constitution and other historical documents.

"Being part [of 'Roads to Liberty'] was the chance of a lifetime," said Walter Perschke, owner of the doubloon and president of Numisco Rare Coins Ltd., 1423 W. Fullerton Ave. "From what we've heard, nearly half of the people who have seen the exhibit so far think the coins are the highlight."

Perschke's keepsakes and the documents are housed in a 45-foot trailer that will have stopped in at least 80 U.S. cities by next September.

The exhibit is sponsored in part by a presidential commission on the bicentennial of the Constitution.

Perschke bought the doubloon—one of seven known specimens—for \$430,000 in 1979. Its only other "public viewing" since then was on the television program "Wall Street Week."

Experts believe that Brasher doubloons were the first gold coins made in the United States. Ephraim Brasher of New York, a silversmith and neighbor of George Washington, minted the coins in 1787, the same year that the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution.

"As a former history teacher, it is fascinating to consider who may have held or owned [my] coin during the formative years of our country. Washington, Jefferson, Adams—a list could include every signer of the Constitution," Perschke said.

The other Perschke coin on exhibit is a privately issued 1783 silver piece called a "quint." He paid \$165,000 for it in 1979.

"Roads to Liberty" left Chicago in mid-March, with Perschke's coins on board, after a three-day stop in Daley Plaza.

The exhibit will be in Ohio next week and then goes to Indianapolis and Evansville; it is not expected to return to the Chicago area.